



U.S. Rep. Michael A. Arcuri (NY-24)

Fighting For Farmers Every Step of the Way

Agriculture is a vital part of Upstate New York's economy and culture. With over 36,000 farms throughout the state generating more than \$4 billion annually, I have fought to ensure that the farming industry remains competitive and continues to serve the needs and interests of our local farmers and consumers.

I have created Agricultural Advisory Boards to learn first-hand the issues facing my district's local dairy, organic, and vegetable farmers, as well as from governmental, business, and educational agriculture organizations.

New York is the third-highest milk producing state and dairy is the largest segment of our agriculture industry. I joined the bipartisan Congressional Dairy Caucus to better address the serious issues facing dairy farmers in Upstate New York.

March 2009 – When Class I milk prices dropped, I urged the USDA to begin sending MILC (Milk Income Loss Contract) payments to our farmers as expeditiously as possible;

May 2009 – Lead a bipartisan group of Congressional colleagues from across the Northeast in asking USDA Secretary Vilsack to consider the cost of production when setting federal milk prices;

July 2009 – Sent two letters, to Secretary Vilsack and Office of Management and Budget Director Peter Orszag respectively, requesting dairy price increases under the Dairy Product Price Support Program– within days the USDA responded by raising support prices from August through October of 2009;

October 2009 – After joining Rep. Lee (NY-26) and other colleagues to request that the FY10 Appropriations bill include assistance for the dairy industry, the bill signed into law by the President included \$290 million in direct support to dairy farmers and \$60 million to purchase cheese and other dairy products for food banks and nutrition programs;

November 2009 – Wrote a letter to Secretary Vilsack with colleagues urging that the USDA quickly, efficiently, and effectively distribute this \$350 million. The Secretary responded by issuing the \$290 million in direct payments immediately. The purchases for food banks and nutrition programs will occur between March and December 2010;

March 2010 – With cheese and non-fat dry milk prices falling again, wrote to Secretary Vilsack urging that he repeat the steps taken in Summer 2009 to increase support prices for cheese and non-fat dried milk;

June 2010 – Wrote to Secretary Vilsack urging him to take into account the cost of production when setting Class I milk prices. Class I, or fluid milk, has the highest value, and likewise the price of Class I milk at market is one of the most important factors used to calculate the blend price farmers are paid at the gate for their product. Although milk prices have increased since the 2009 collapse, the high cost of feed and other inputs continues to stand in the way of financial security for many farmers still struggling to rebuild after one of the worst years for dairy in the past four decades. Raising Class I milk prices would increase the amount paid to farmers, helping them recoup the cost of production and turn a profit.

June 2010 – Joined with Senator Leahy, Representative DeFazio, and colleagues to protect organic dairy in a letter to Secretary Vilsack asking him to fully review the facts, law, and science behind Genetically Engineered alfalfa. The USDA recently released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement preliminary finding stating that “no significant impact” would occur as a result of deregulating GE alfalfa. With likely and unavoidable contamination resulting from deregulation, the USDA organic seal would no longer represent GE-free products and the \$1.4 billion organic dairy industry would suffer as farmers struggle to source adequate organic feed and forage. As a result we asked that he take “no action” to maintain GE Alfalfa’s regulated status.

Cosponsored the Dairy Fairness Act of 2009, H.R. 3166, to index the MILC payment rate to inflation – this rate has not been adjusted since the 1970’s;

Supported the Dairy Relief and Market Stabilization Act, H.R. 3322, to retroactively increase MILC payments beginning from the second quarter of 2009;

Sponsored the Dairy and Sheep H-2A Visa Enhancement Act, H.R. 3744, to include aliens coming temporarily to the United States to work as a shepherd or a dairy worker within the H-2A nonimmigrant visa category for a three-year initial period, with additional three-year extensions;

Sponsored H.R. 4117, to amend the Agricultural Adjustment Act to clarify that milk ownership is transferred to the processor when it leaves the producer's facility – farmers shouldn't be forced to pay hauling and stop fees, fuel surcharges, and other fees that aren't related to production;

To protect dairy farmers and the Upstate Dairy industry from the dangers of unbalanced trade agreements:

January 2010 – Joined Congressional colleagues from New York in writing to United States Trade Representative Ambassador Kirk expressing concern that a US-New Zealand trade agreement under the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) would negatively impact Upstate New York's dairy industry and urging that any trade agreement with New Zealand take into account that the high concentration of New Zealand's dairy industry has allowed it to control more than 40% of the global dairy trade. This could allow New Zealand to flood our market with new dairy imports and undercut domestic prices, harming thousands of small and medium-sized American dairy farms and hundreds of rural manufacturers;

January 2010 – Wrote a another letter to Ambassador Kirk later that month with colleagues from the Dairy Caucus requesting that US-New Zealand dairy trade be excluded from any final trade agreement. The Ambassador's response noted the concern of dairy being included and said that the Administration would continue consulting intensively with Congress and U.S. stakeholders regarding further negotiations with New Zealand.

Cosponsored H.R. 3674, the Milk Import Tariff Equity Act (companion bill to Schumer's S. 1542), that would close a loophole allowing the tariff-free importation of foreign Milk protein concentrates (MPC). MPCs are derived from milk and used in both food and non-food related industries. MPCs have replaced powdered dry milk and have driven down the price of milk for U.S. farmers. This bill would encourage the use of domestically produced protein and raise milk prices.

I have also committed the following efforts to assisting other sectors of our Upstate agriculture industry:

Urged the President to take back cuts to the Market Access Program (MAP) on behalf of the apple industry in his 2010 budget request to Congress. The MAP Program helps U.S. farmers market their crops internationally for the first time;

Wrote to USDA Secretary Vilsack to ask for New York State's fair share of project awards for state and local agricultural funding authorized under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (the Recovery Bill);

Secured funding to create and publicize a small farm energy independence demonstration in Cortland County that will establish a model "green" farm;

Secured funding to provide technical training, guidance and some financial assistance to help family farms explore and adopt effective grazing-based production methods;

Fought to see that farmers and growers in Broome, Cortland, Chenango, Delaware and Tioga Counties were eligible for federal disaster relief benefits to help recover from extensive damage caused by frost and high winds in May 2009.

Sent a letter to Secretary Vilsack asking him to make USDA-FSA loan guarantees and direct loans an immediate priority in the coming months, and make all farm operations eligible for loan guarantees, regardless of their ownership structures. Such guarantees could be leveraged for more money from Farm Credit associations, commercial banks and other lenders for farmers. Using money authorized in the Recovery Act, USDA has provided nearly \$1 million in direct farm loans to farmers in NY-24.

For more information regarding my work in Washington and Upstate New York, please visit my official website www.arcuri.house.gov and sign up for my monthly e-newsletter. And as always, please do not hesitate to contact my Washington or District offices:

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